



# *Milwaukee County*

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Supervisor Eyon Biddle, Sr., 10<sup>th</sup> District  
Supervisor Gerry Broderick, 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Supervisor Peggy A. Romo West, 12<sup>th</sup> District  
Supervisor Jason Haas, 14<sup>th</sup> District  
Supervisor Nikiya Q. Harris, 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
Supervisor John F. Weishan, Jr., 16<sup>th</sup> District

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## **SUPERVISORS PUSH FOR PRIVATE-SECTOR DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFIT MODEL FOR COUNTY WORKFORCE**

*Similar benefits already offered at some of Milwaukee's largest employers*

**Milwaukee, WI** – This morning, a broad coalition of Milwaukee County Supervisors, joined by representatives from Aurora Health Care and other public, private and religious groups, formally introduced a resolution to offer health benefits to domestic partners of County employees.

“This is a pro-business move, and we’re taking a page out of the book of some of the largest private-sector employers in Milwaukee. They use this tool to recruit the most talented employees in the marketplace,” Supervisor Dimitrijevic said. “The time has come, and the time to act is now.”

“This is about treating employees fairly and making civil rights gains in Milwaukee County,” Supervisor Biddle said. “Milwaukee County is one of the last local governments not already offering this tool. It’s a fair price to pay for equal rights.”

According to the Human Rights Campaign, there are at least 819 municipalities, counties and school districts, including the State of Wisconsin, City of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public Schools, that already provide domestic partnership health benefits for their employees. One percent of the City of Milwaukee workforce has registered for this benefit, and Milwaukee County is expecting similar results.

Today’s announcement was made at Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center. With more than 31,000 local employees, Aurora Health Care is the largest private-sector employer in Wisconsin and has offered domestic partnership benefits to employees since 2005. In that time, Aurora has been a national health care leader, attracting some of the most talented health professionals in the world. In addition, six of the ten Fortune 500 employers in the Milwaukee area offer similar benefits.

According to the human resources firm Hewitt Associates, adding domestic partners to health benefits plans placed employers “no more at risk than when adding spouses” and reported an average cost increase of less than 1% to employers. A one percent increase in Milwaukee County would cost about \$700,000.

Supervisors Marina Dimitrijevic, Eyon Biddle, Sr., Gerry Broderick, Peggy A. Romo West, Jason Haas, Nikiya Q. Harris, and John F. Weishan, Jr., attended the news conference and thanked County Executive Chris Abele for supporting this change. Milwaukee County Clerk Joe Czarnecki; Sheila Cochran from the Milwaukee Area Labor Council; representatives from Fair Wisconsin, Equality Wisconsin and Voces de la Frontera; and Reverend Ken Wheeler from Cross Lutheran Church also appeared in support of this initiative.

County Board Chairman Lee Holloway has referred the item to the Finance & Audit Committee and the Personnel Committee for further consideration. If approved by the County Board and signed by the County Executive, the benefit would be made available through open enrollment and would take effect on January 1, 2012. The benefit would apply to both same and opposite domestic partners (who are certified via state requirements) and their dependents. The benefit does not apply to retirees.

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